

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4-6 and 11-20 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 5, 6 and 14 have been amended. No new matter is involved. The amendments to claims 6 and 14 are made to correct obvious grammatical errors.

Reconsideration of the application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner is thanked for the indication that claims 4-6 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims. The subject matter of claim 4 has been added to claim 1 to place claim 1 in condition for allowance.

Entry of Amendment

Applicants respectfully submit that it is proper to enter this Amendment because it rewrites the subject matter of claim 4 in independent form by adding into claim 1 the subject matter of claim 4, which has been indicated as containing allowable subject matter, and indicated as being allowed if re-written into independent form.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Claims 1, 2, 11, 13 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by D'Andrea (U. S. Patent 5,653,683). Claims 1, 2, 13, 14, 15 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Winkler et al (U. S. Patent 6,482,142 – hereinafter

“Winkler”). Claims 12, and 16-19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over D’Andrea. Claims 14 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over D’Andrea as applied to claims 1 and 13 above, and further in view of Winkler. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1, as now amended, includes the subject matter of now canceled claim 4, the subject matter of claim 4 being indicated as allowable over the applied art. Neither D’Andrea nor Winkler disclose the combination of features recited in amended claim 1, which recites a combination of features wherein when said chamber is deflated said at least one tunnel channel is accommodated in a corresponding longitudinal groove present in the circumferential surface of said elongated body of said supportive probe.

Moreover, all other pending claims depend either directly or indirectly from amended claim 1, and patentably define over the applied art for at least that reason.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 of all pending claims are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Favorable reconsideration and an early Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Because the additional prior art cited by the Examiner has been included merely to show the state of the prior art and has not been utilized to reject the claims, no further comments concerning these documents are considered necessary at this time.

In the event that any outstanding matters remain in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Robert J. Webster, Reg. No. 46,472 the undersigned at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

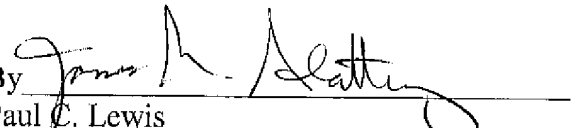
Applicants respectfully petition under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) and § 1.17 for a three-month(s) extension of time in which to respond to the Examiner's Office Action. The Extension of Time Fee in the amount of **\$1050.00** is attached hereto.


If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By


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